



-Photo by MCSA Damian Berg

Florida State Representative Ronald J. Renuart presents memorial street sign during the 25th annual memorial ceremony for the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) at Naval Station Mayport. Several crewmembers and their families came to honor the 37 Sailors who were killed while on patrol in the Persian Gulf 25 years ago.

NS Mayport Honors Fallen Shipmates

By Paige Gnann
The Mirror editor

More than 200 shipmates, friends and families filled the Mayport Memorial Park on May 17, 2012 to pay their respects to the fallen crew of USS Stark (FFG 31) 25 years after the frigate was struck

by an Iraqi missile while deployed in the Arabian Gulf.

In the early morning hours of May 17, 1987, two Iraqi missiles struck the Naval Station Mayport-based frigate. Despite the severe damage inflicted, the heroic

efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship. Thirty-seven Sailors lost their lives during the attack.

Stark was decommissioned at Mayport in 1999. In order to preserve the tradition once the ship was retired, the Naval Order of the United

States, North Florida Commandery, assumed sponsorship for the memorial service.

Guest speaker for this year's event was Rear Adm. David M. Thomas Jr., Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic. He was stationed at Mayport

aboard Stark's sister ship, USS Estocin (FFG 15), and talked about the reputation of Stark and its crew in the basin.

"Stark was the ship to beat," he told the crowd. "Stark was awesome. When we watched her sail off on deployment, [we

watched the best of the basin go]."

"As word came of the sacrifice... those tales were told with a sense of pride as we read those words of heroism."

Thomas said he was amazed at "what a tight

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Former USS Stark crewmembers gather around Florida Rep. Ronald Renuart as he holds a new street sign proclaiming a portion of Main Street/Mayport Road as the newly renamed USS Stark Memorial Drive at the 25th anniversary memorial of the attack on the NS Mayport-based frigate. Above right, Shannon Lacanda places a wreath in honor of her late father Steven E. Kendall, a USS Stark Sailor, during the 25th annual memorial ceremony.



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crew" the Stark Sailors were and hoped that his own crew would emulate them.

A highlight of this year's ceremony included the announcement by

Florida Rep. Ronald Renuart that a portion of Main Street on base and Mayport Road to Wonderwood Drive will be renamed USS Stark Memorial Drive. Following

Thomas' remarks, former Stark crewmembers Tim Martineau read the names of each crewmember as the tolling of USS Stark's bell by Peter Weber rang throughout the park followed by the laying of the wreath.

The ceremony ended with a 21-gun salute and the playing of taps to honor those that did not come home.



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Peter K. Webber, former USS Stark Sailor, tolls the bell during the 25th annual memorial ceremony for the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) at Naval Station Mayport as names of the fallen Sailors are read. Several crewmembers and their families came to honor the 37 Sailors who were killed while on patrol in the Persian Gulf 25 years ago.